

Kyodan

News Letter

THE UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST IN JAPAN
JAPAN CHRISTIAN CENTER
3-18 Nishi-Waseda 2-chome
Shinjuku-ku, Tokyo 160, Japan

Cable Address: Japankyodan Tokyo

Telephone: 202-0541

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KIYOSHI TAKAI BECOMES KYODAN GENERAL SECRETARY

Meeting for the fifth time since it was constituted a year ago, the Kyodan Executive Committee met February 23-25 at the Japan Christian Center in Tokyo and approved the appointment of the Rev. Kiyoshi Takai, 42, as General Secretary, to fulfill the unexpired term of George Hanabusa, who resigned in September. (See KNL No. 97, October 30, 1975, for sketch on Takai.)

The financial crisis of the Kyodan and the touchy ministerial qualifications issue dominated the meeting, which had almost 100 per cent attendance of its 30 members and a constant gallery of observers.

For the first half of the meeting, the mounting financial crisis in the Kyodan was reported, questioned, explained, debated. A revised working budget of ¥88 million for fiscal 1975 (April 1975 through March 1976), with an anticipated deficit, was approved, in spite of the Budget Committee's strong recommendation that there be no deficit in 1975. By the end of March the accumulated deficit for the past five years will reach an estimated ¥56.8 million (¥300 = \$U.S. 1.00). The amount of unpaid district apportionments is ¥47 million.

Two main causes for the deficit were identified. One was laid at the feet of the Executive Committee itself inasmuch as four meetings have been held this year but only two were in the budget. (Because no Standing Committee has been elected, the full committee must meet when decisions are to be made.) The other problem is a deficit on the income side because of the districts that have not paid into the Kyodan budget the amounts requested or apportioned.

For 1976, a proposed budget of ¥95 million was approved, about 8 per cent above the 1975 budget, with a balance kept between expenditures and anticipated income. An item of ¥900,000 in the budget for special support for the Okinawa district was approved.

Long, emotion-filled debate was touched off by a Budget Committee bill calling for the naming of a committee to plan for reorganization of the Kyodan's financial affairs, when reference was made to such possibilities as reducing the Kyodan office staff, attempting to obtain overdue payments from districts and receiving increased grants from the Board of Publication.

In the end the bill was passed, and a committee constituted of three lay mem-

bers of the Committee on Budget, the vice moderator and the secretary.

The Committee on Ministerial Qualifications, which had declared its activities frozen last December, brought in a report that stimulated heated debate for the better part of two days.

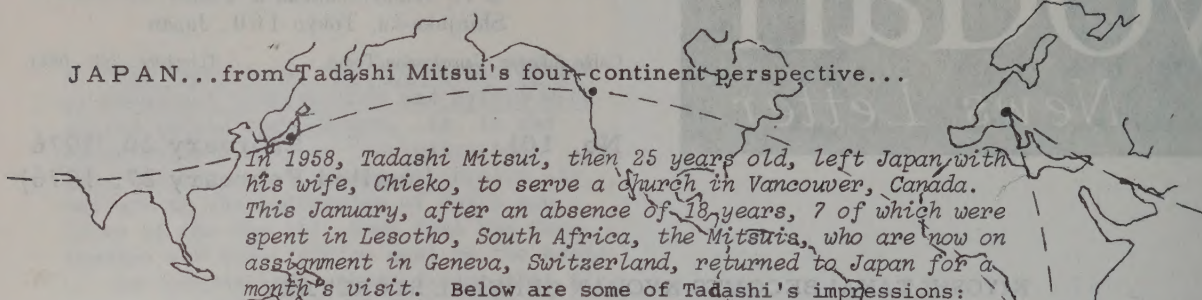
As the various speakers let off steam, one Executive Committee member remarked that he was not disturbed by the various opinions because the exchanges convinced him how close the participants were to agreement.

However, after two days of thawing, passage, by a close vote, of a bill to proceed with examinations, following the procedures in the Constitution and with the Kyodan Confession of Faith as the basis, led to the commission members' resignation. Seven new members were then selected by ballot from among Executive members and district moderators for a new commission.

A special committee to deal with the Korean minority problem in Japan and with relationships with Korean Christians was approved, with the understanding that it would not require financing from the regular budget but would raise its own funds, for which permission was granted.

On Tuesday, Dr. Heinz Joachim Held, president of the Office for Foreign Relations of the Evangelical Church in Germany, Frankfurt, brought greetings on behalf of the German churches and the delegation of eight persons who will be participating in a special consultation involving the Kyodan and the National Christian Council at the Oiso Academy House, February 25-28.

JAPAN...from Tadashi Mitsui's four-continent perspective...



In 1958, Tadashi Mitsui, then 25 years old, left Japan with his wife, Chieko, to serve a church in Vancouver, Canada. This January, after an absence of 18 years, 7 of which were spent in Lesotho, South Africa, the Mitsuis, who are now on assignment in Geneva, Switzerland, returned to Japan for a month's visit. Below are some of Tadashi's impressions:

My main impression of Japan, after being absent from Japan for 18 years, is that the Japanese are all behaving like the rich man who still feels he is poor. They are trying so hard to reach to somewhere--without having any direction except some kind of economic achievement.

But after having lived in Africa and in Europe for a while, my impression is that the Japanese have reached the top, so why are they still trying so hard?

I was sorry to find that, in all this running-to-catch-something, they are losing a kind of humanness, the art of human relationships...I feel the Japanese should stop somewhere along the way and start worrying about their souls...Let me tell you a story:

One day in Africa I was driving a car, and I saw an old man whom I happened to know--a local pastor. I offered him a lift. He refused. I didn't understand--he looked pretty tired. It wasn't easy for him, sitting there in the sun.

"You should be going somewhere," I said.

"I worked long enough today and did quite a few things so I am sitting here so my soul can catch up with me," he said.

I think it is a pretty good lesson for Japan.

I felt it maddening to see so many signs advertising so many kinds of schools. But if you turn to the children--I feel so sorry for them. They have to study so hard, even from primary school. It's depressing. Some of them are even losing their child-ness, their open-ness.

Overseas I had a chance to see the products of these universities. They lack flexibility, they lack the ability to think for themselves.

After working in Africa, then coming here, through Hong Kong, Korea and Japan, I realize the Asiatics are very very hardworking, very industrious people. The way the Chinese work in Hong Kong, the way the Koreans work in Seoul, the way the Japanese work in Japan--it is the same.

They are also very ordered societies. Delinquency and theft are very low. This is very striking--the degree of control they can maintain. Good or bad? It can be either--bad if the control is in the hands of fanatics.

I think I must have been brought up in the good old days...

SEEKING FRANK CHURCH RELATIONS BETWEEN JAPAN AND NORTH AMERICA

"I felt for the first time that the North American churches are beginning to listen to what the Japanese side has to say," said COC* General Secretary Yoichiro Saeki, reporting to KNL Editor Michiko Okuda on the meeting of the executive committee of the Japan-North American Commission on Cooperative Mission held in Atlanta, Georgia, January 20-21.

Saeki said that the general meeting of JNAC to be held in New York in June will give major attention to his 11-page paper on "Historical Survey and Problem Areas in Cooperative Relationship with North America," which was approved by the November full meeting of the Council of Cooperation, and to

responses to the Saeki paper written by other members of JNAC.

Saeki wrote his analysis following the June 1975 JNAC general meeting, when Japanese members felt there was little response to what they were trying to point out about the differences in basic policy on the Japanese side and on the North American side.

In his paper, Saeki identifies two main areas of policy difference: one, missionary personnel; two, how mission is carried on.

As a result of financial stringencies, North American churches have been deciding to reduce the number of missionaries in Japan and send short-term specialists. In Japan,

however, the attitude is that such persons are not what Japan needs. What it does want is long-term missionaries who will learn the language and be involved in the life of the church and schools. In response to financial limitations, the Japan side is saying, "We will contribute to missionary support."

In comparing approaches to mission methodology, Saeki says, "North American churches have borrowed the planning methods of business. They establish a 'project,' analyze the data, decide needs, draw up objectives and set up the structure, budget and personnel necessary to fulfill their objectives."

But Japan is not thinking 'projects,'" says Saeki. "We had some projects after the war but, looking at them now, we see they didn't amount to a great deal. Some local projects may develop roots, but I don't think we can expect much to happen nationally."

Saeki identifies three attitudes toward future relationships with North America. One

favors continuing to receive missionaries as in the past "because Christians in Japan are a minority." Another feels that "if North America doesn't provide support for its missionaries, we might as well sever relationships."

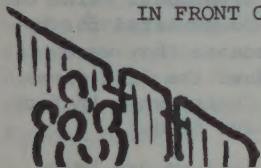
A third position, and the dominant one, is that COC, while respecting the relationships of the past 100 years, should seek to develop new, more mature relationships with North America and, on this basis, proceed to develop relationships with Asia and Africa.

Saeki hopes the June meeting will bring about new, more mature relationships between Japan and North American churches.

*Council of Cooperation includes Kyodan, school and social work groups in Japan; Kyodan belongs to JNAC and sends representatives on behalf of COC.

Copies of the Saeki report are available from KNL or COC.

IN FRONT OF THE KANEMI COMPANY



In the November-December issue of KNL, Megumi Amemiya underscored the church as the presence of Christ with those who suffer, sharing their burdens. In this issue Mitsuhiro Inukai describes the Kanemi monzen Kyokai (the-church-by-the-gate-of-the Kanemi Company).

Kanemi monzen Kyokai is not found in any directory, has no building, no membership rolls, no budget nor paid clergy.

Yet it meets regularly, on the 4th Saturday of every month, from 7:00 in the morning until 7:00 at night in front of the gate of the Kanemi Company in the city of Kokura, on the southern island of Kyushu.

Its ministry consists of song and prayer; Bible study and prophetic preaching--the call to repentance delivered through a bullhorn to immediate participants and to employees and families within the gates of the Kanemi factory.

A Fatal Leakage

The name "Kanemi" calls to mind one of several large-scale food contamination tragedies that have occurred in Japan in the last fifteen years. Beginning in the fall of 1968, an estimated 5,000 persons reported symptoms such as blindness, loss of hair, muscle deterioration, skin blemishes, and there were at least 40 deaths, eventually attributed to Yusho, a poisoning of the body. The effects on children are not yet fully known.

The cause was traced to a rice oil made by the Kanemi Company. A leak in pipes carry-

ing a lethal chemical, poly-chloro-biphenyl (PCB) through deodorizing vats had released PCB into the oil. Later investigations found the company and government negligent in not having taken proper precautions in view of the nature of the process. There remains a widespread conviction that neither industry nor the government has taken responsible steps to avoid future tragedies.

The Kamino family was among those who felt the effects. When the disease struck their daughter, they decided not to withdraw in shame--as many were doing--but to encourage all victims to speak out about the situation. As Christians they sought to probe the nature of the evil behind the experience. They led in organizing a society of the victims, which brought the dangers of PCB to the attention of the public through writings and meetings and instituted a civil suit against the company.

But, in 1972, members of the Kamino family announced that they were withdrawing from the organization and taking their names off the list of plaintiffs. Their action surprised and disappointed many people. "Why are you withdrawing?" many asked, and the Kamino family themselves struggled to

clarify the reasons for their withdrawal. Eventually they moved the arena of their struggle to the gates in front of the Kanemi Company, erecting two small huts, in which they now live.

One reason for the Kaminos' withdrawal from the legal action was realization of the danger that the issue would be resolved on a superficial level: that the judge would decide what amount of compensation Kanemi Company should pay, and that would be the end. They also saw victims being taken in by this, to the point that they were merely asking, "How much money will we get?"

"The evil that must be pursued," the Kaminos were saying, "is the attitude that guilt can be absolved by the payment of money, with no repentance and no reform."

The Kanemi Monzen Kyokai

When the Kaminos moved to the gate in front of the company, a small group of supporters joined them once a month in an effort to understand their motivation. One of the group was the Rev. Mitsuhiro Inukai, pastor of a preaching point in the Chikuho mining area.

Inukai says that only after becoming personally involved in the Kanemi case did he realize that there is something very different in the environmental cases, in comparison with the usual union-management confrontation, for they involve a basic view of human life. Also, in union-management talks, one finds the strong fighting the strong, whereas in environmental cases, the struggle is carried on by the poor, the maimed, the suffering.

It was as the participants in the Saturday group sought to examine themselves and their feelings and methods through prayer, Bible study and prophetic preaching that Mr.

Inukai began to refer to this activity as the *Kanemi monzen Kyokai*.

The challenges raised by the issues are reflected in Inukai's sermons and writings.

"The Old Testament words, 'An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth' were superceded by the teaching of Jesus to 'Love your enemies.' Yet the Kanemi experiences has forced me to take another look at these words. If you follow the line of 'an eye for an eye and tooth for a tooth,' it comes to the point of 'a slash for a slash, a cut for a cut,' and finally 'a life for a life.'

When a life can be compensated only by giving up one's own life, that puts a very heavy price on the life of the other person. We, who think that we can put a monetary amount on the value of a life, can't begin to imagine how great a price that would be.

The Kanemi Company, which was responsible for the deaths of some 40 persons, has not lost its life. All it has paid is a very small portion of its assets to "buy off" the victims and compensate them for their suffering--an item that was in fact added to the "production costs."

The Israelites knew the tremendous value of a life that can only be compensated for by a life. It is for this reason they were able to accept as Good News the life given in their stead by Jesus Christ when in fact it was they who should have died.

We can't help but think that we are being deceived at a very basic point.

One place where this deception was exposed was in the desert.

The area in front of the Kanemi Company is a desert, a desert in which the drama of the struggle between Jesus Christ and Satan is unfolding."

YASUKUNI SHRINE PROBLEM

Efforts to nationalize the Yasukuni Shrine to the War Dead are being refurbished.

In early February the Liberal Democratic Party formed a committee on Consolation of the Spirits of the Non-combatant War Dead, many of whom are not enshrined at Yasukuni.

Late last year the administrative committee of the Conference for Yasukuni Shrine Nationalization approved a campaign to win popular support for state maintenance

of the Shrine and state-sponsored ceremonies.

The strategy includes a new nation-wide movement for nationalization, appealing to the *kokumin* (subjects of the state) to support Yasukuni Shrine Nationalization as a patriotic duty; increased hearings, opinion surveys and visits by the Emperor and Prime Minister, to be cited as grounds for passing a Yasukuni bill; designation of a national holiday on August 15 and a national festival at Yasukuni Shrine for consolation of the war dead; and

official visits to Yasukuni and local *Gokoku* ("state") shrines by the Emperor and government officials.

Those who oppose nationalization observed February 11 as Freedom of Faith Day rather than National Foundation Day.

Christians met in rallies and lecture meetings, focusing on the Emperor System. Because this subject was for many years a taboo, the intricate relationship between Shinto, the government and the Emperor is not well understood.